



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Council Delegate Davis Filfred provides report to the Utah Tribal Leaders

OREM, Utah – Council Delegate Davis Filfred (Mexican Water, Aneth, Teecnospos, Tólikan, Red Mesa) provided a report to the Utah Tribal Leaders gathering on July 18 at their quarterly meeting at the Utah Valley University. The report included updates regarding Navajo Nation initiatives and advocacy issues relating to the Utah Navajo area. Delegate Filfred serves as the vice chair for the UTL.

Among the several topics within Delegate Filfred's report, he highlighted issues such as the upcoming Navajo Nation FY2018 budget session, the Bears Ears National Monument, and concerns regarding the White Mesa Uranium Mill in Utah.

He stated that the Navajo Nation Council had been working diligently to iron out a deal regarding the Navajo Generating Station's proposed shut down, which had caused a slight delay in beginning the budgetary process for the Nation.

"The Navajo Nation Council started the FY2018 budgetary process a month behind schedule due to uncertainty in projected revenues. There was a substantial drop in our Nation's income, but Council is looking at various options and resources to protect direct services for Navajo citizens and employment for the tribal workforce," said Delegate Filfred.

He added that NGS employment plays a significant role for Navajo people residing in the Utah Navajo communities of Naatsis'áán (Navajo Mountain) and Oljato, as well as employment at the Peabody Kayenta Mine that supplies coal to the power plant. Council's June 26 approval of the NGS lease extension allows the operations of the power plant to continue until December 2019.

Delegate Filfred, who also serves as a commissioner on the Bears Ears Commission, informed the UTL that the Navajo Nation continues to advocate for the permanent designation of the Bears Ears National Monument, and that the Nation remains in opposition to the U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke's proposal to recommend a reduction of the land area within the monument.

"The Bears Ears Commission is nonetheless continuing with the collaborative management opportunities made available by the Bears Ears National Monument Proclamation. The Bears Ears summer gathering hosted by the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe was successful, and once again

demonstrated the importance of culture and connection to the environment,” said Delegate Filfred.

He expressed gratitude to the UTL for their continued support of the Bears Ears National Monument and said the unity of the Utah tribes contributed to its designation in January by former President Barack Obama.

The report also conveyed support for the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe by the Utah Navajo chapters in opposing the renewal of the White Mesa Uranium Mill’s operating permit. The mill is the only operating conventional uranium mill in the United States, and has the capacity to generate over eight million pounds of uranium per year.

“The White Mesa Uranium Mill’s operating permit apparently expired in 2007 and has not been renewed. The mill is located close to the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe’s land and a few miles from the Navajo Nation fee-land community of Westwater. The Navajo Nation opposes all mining and transportation of uranium waste across Navajo land and support the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe’s efforts to eliminate this devastating practice,” said Delegate Filfred.

He said that there are several concerns regarding the aging of the facility, possible contamination of ground water, past environmental violations, and acceptance of new radioactive waste material from other parts of the country.

The next UTL meeting is scheduled for Aug. 11 in Pocatello, Idaho, in which the Northwestern Band of Shoshone who has tribal land areas within Utah and Idaho, will host the gathering.

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